

# YOUR ENERGY CONNECTION

## Energy Costs on the Rise

September 2005

Natural gas prices have risen significantly in recent months, surpassing nearly all forecasts. The natural gas demand has been boosted by unseasonably cold winter weather, rapid growth in the use of natural gas fired electricity generation facilities, and general economic growth and a limited increase in supply. While America has abundant domestic natural gas resources, our current supply chain is near the breaking point. Low supply levels are resulting in natural gas prices that are two to three times above the historic average. High prices are hurting our economy, putting additional strain on the current economic recovery. The increased winter weather this past season caused significant increases in the cost of natural gas, but due to rising costs in a market that is expected to decrease in the summer months, Rocky Mount and most other utility customers are facing increased natural gas costs of approximately forty-five percent for the upcoming winter season.

More than 56 million homes in the U. S. use natural gas. Recent spikes in natural gas prices are taking their toll on American families. While consumers faced bill shock last winter when prices rose, they were not exposed to the full brunt of gas prices in their gas and electricity bills. This winter Rocky Mount Utilities will more than likely have to make adjustments to reflect the increase in natural gas costs and will result in higher home heating costs, especially if there is a cold winter ahead of us that draws down natural gas storage. Energy costs have a direct impact on family budgets. Fixed income families and the elderly are often the hardest hit by rising natural gas costs. These rising costs are also reflected in the gasoline market. We continue to wonder how much higher gasoline prices can soar as well.

Today's tight natural gas markets have been a long time in coming, and futures prices suggest we are not apt to return to earlier periods of relative abundance and low prices anytime soon. **Plan ahead for your winter heating bills now!** Inquire with the Customer Service staff on budget billing and start applying energy efficiency and weatherization techniques to your home.

Budget billing is a plan of equal payments throughout the year with a settlement month at the end. The utility customer makes equal payments each month based on the average cost of services in the previous year. At settlement the customer may have a credit balance if less services were used than estimated or may have a balance due if more services were consumed. This is an excellent option for customers on a fixed income. It makes budgeting your utility bill each month much easier....you always know how much your bill will be.

It is important for all utility customers to prepare for winter heating costs by weatherizing their homes. Weatherstrip windows, caulk around windows and doors, add insulation in attics, and fill pipe entrances. Weatherization programs may be available through the City of Rocky Mount Planning Department and the Nash Edgecombe Economic Development (NEED) office. For assistance with weatherization, customers may contact Gloria Hunter at 972-1533 for more information.

## BEAT THE PEAK

“Peak” or “Peak Demand” is the greatest amount of electricity used at one time by an electric system, normally when a large number of customers are using appliances at the same time. By controlling the electric load or load management, we can keep electric costs in control. Rocky Mount averages approximately less than 10 days per month load managing. There are several options available:

### Electric Water Heater Control-

Water heaters are cycled off during load management periods. Controlling water heaters will not affect the amount of hot water available. Customers receive **\$2.00** credit each month.

### Electric Heat Strip Control-

Heat strips are controlled during the winter load management periods, while compressors continue to provide heat. Customers receive **\$15.00** credit each month if the temperature falls to 25 degrees or below on a non-holiday weekday.

### Central Air Conditioning Total Control-

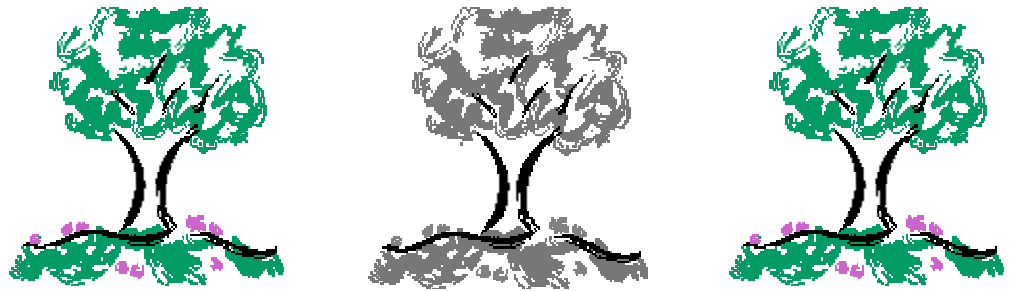
Customers receive **\$20.00** credit each month for July, August, and September. The compressor is turned off for the entire load management period. Fans will continue to circulate the cool air in your house, but your compressor will not generate any new cool air.

**There are no installation or maintenance charges associated with this program.**

**Call 972-1283 for more information .  
Start your savings now!**

## Revision to Natural Gas Service Connection Charge

All new utility accounts are charged a **\$25.00** Service Connection Charge during normal working hours. This fee is required to recover the costs associated with activating a new account. In the event the customer chooses to activate their natural gas service after normal working hours, there will be a **\$50.00** natural gas connection fee.



## How Trees Are Pruned

The City prunes trees based on a technique called “directional pruning.” This technique was developed by the National Arborist Association, approved by the American National Standards Institute, and adopted by the pruning industry as the standard. The city also uses Dr. Alex Shigo’s guide, *Pruning Trees near Electric Utility Lines* as a reference.

With directional pruning, entire limbs or portions of limbs growing toward the lines are removed at the main branch or trunk. They are removed at a point where they would naturally shed if they had cause. By doing this, future growth will be directed away from the wires, and rapidly growing attached sprouts will be minimized. The city follows a pattern of trimming known as circuit trimming. This means the trees are trimmed along an electric circuit. Trimming is also done in “hot spots.” This is when there is a limb laying or rubbing against a primary voltage electric line and causing problems. Rocky Mount trim’s trees on a five year schedule.

